

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
APG ADVISORY CENTER
ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, MARYLAND 21005-5001**

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL BULLETIN

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SUPERVISOR'S SPECIAL EDITION

This is a Special edition for supervisors devoted exclusively to the Total Army Performance Evaluation System (TAPES).

TAPES

The Total Army Performance Evaluation System (TAPES) was implemented at Aberdeen Proving Ground in 1995. There have been many changes to the system, since that time, which this office normally conveyed to you by special TAPES Bulletins and Newsletters. This latest bulletin provides supervisors basic information on TAPES and changes that have occurred over the years.

Background.

The TAPES covers two systems, the Base and the Senior Systems. The rating cycles for these two systems at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) are provided in this bulletin.

You've Got to Have a Plan.

Proper performance plans are the foundations of both the Base and Senior Systems. They are the essence of the systems and the primary area on which the effectiveness of the rating depends. Without an approved performance plan, an Evaluation Report cannot be completed. The plan communicates to the employee the expectations for the rating period and for which tasks he/she will be held accountable. The development of a plan should be a joint process between the rater and the employee as they attempt to identify ways of improving organizational effectiveness in the accomplishment of the agency's missions and goals. Hopefully, the Ratee and Rater can reach an agreement on what the employee needs to do to help the organization meet its goal, but if agreement cannot be reached, the final determination rests with the Rater (normally the employee's first line supervisor). The employee's position description and the organization's mission and goals are some of the things that should be reviewed in developing a performance plan. It would also be appropriate and, often beneficial, for the Rater to share his/her performance objectives as well as those of the Senior Rater with the employee. Performance plans are recorded on DA Form 7223-1 for Base system employees and DA Form 7222-1 for employees in the Senior system. After a performance plan has been developed, you may wonder

if you've developed a good performance plan. Hopefully, you can say yes to most of the following:

The performance expectations are specific, measurable, and challenging; you and the employee worked together in developing the plan; and an understanding, if not agreement, should have been reached.

SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE PLAN POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Performance plans should be initiated and completed within 30 days of the beginning date of the rating cycle.
- The performance plan becomes effective the date it is initiated and dated by the senior rater.
- An employee must have worked at least 120 days under an approved plan before he/she can be evaluated.
- There is no minimum period of time before one can serve as a rater or senior rater.
- Rater and Senior Rater ratings must be in agreement.
- The performance plan must be attached to the evaluation report.
- Performance standards need not be developed for objectives. The Department of Army has developed preprinted standards to use. They were developed to meet regulatory requirements and to free the Rater from the time consuming task of developing them. If the objective is written without a measure, the preprinted standards must be used in order to determine level of performance. Bullet comments should support the rating given and clearly document what the Ratee accomplished. To be considered timely, Evaluation Reports must be received in the APG Advisory Center within 45 days after the end of the rating period.

A FRESH START

Each new rating cycle should bring new and/or more difficult challenges to the rated individual (without them how can the organization and the ratee continue to improve?). With this in mind, ratees should not assume that they will receive the same rating year after year. Raters, however, should be aware that ratees, unless otherwise notified, will tend to assume that they are performing as well as they performed in the previous year. This situation is particularly true when the "new" plan offers no real change from the previous plan. Remember, it's the rating chain that is ultimately responsible for ensuring the plan meets organizational needs and appropriately challenges the ratee. Raters who identify a downward turn in performance should immediately notify the ratee and discuss the matter. If the rater is now using a different measure from the one used the previous last year, inform the ratee and make sure the change is documented as part of the plan. This early notice should help to prevent unpleasant surprises for either the ratee (lowered ratings) or the rater (formal complaints). If the ratee's performance falls below "Success", the servicing APG Advisory Center representative should be consulted.

ARE ALL THINGS EQUAL?

When a performance plan contains sub-elements (sub-objectives or supporting tasks) to an overall performance expectation, the rater should inform the ratee of the relative importance of each of the sub-elements to the accomplishment of the overall performance expectation. It is possible for a ratee to perform at the successful level in one or more of these components and still be rated for the overall expectation as "Excellence." For example, if accomplishments on the remaining components were considered to be at the "Excellence" level and that these components were considered of more importance than the ones rated "Success." It is also possible, that in order to receive an "Excellence" in the overall performance expectation, each component would have to be exceeded since each component was of equal value. Keep in mind that it is the rating assigned to the overall objective (Senior System) or the responsibility rating (Base System) that determines the overall performance rating.

WHO SIGNS WHEN?

The Evaluation Report must go through the rating chain and be signed before it is given to the ratee for his/her signature. While a rater may discuss performance with the ratee, the overall performance rating cannot be discussed until it has been completed by the senior rater. The ratee's signature does not mean he/she agrees with the rating, only that the administrative data is correct and that the evaluation has been discussed with him/her.

OTHER TAPES REMINDERS

- Senior Raters rate on performance only, not on potential.
- If the Rater or Ratee departs within 120 days of the end of the rating period, an annual rating should be prepared.
- The Values section is the place to recognize Ratee contributions which go beyond specific work accomplishments.
- Employees must be counseled at least twice during the rating period, i.e. within 30 days of the beginning of the rating period and at the mid-point of the rating period.

Absolute standards, although not illegal per se, are rarely appropriate.

The Rating Formulas for the two Systems are on page nine of this bulletin.

FREQUENTLY ASKED TAPES QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION: If my supervisor does not provide me with face-to-face documented midpoint counseling, is my rating still valid?

ANSWER: Yes. The rating stands unless there is some other error. Failure to conduct a midpoint does not require extending the rating period or negate the rating. The failure could weaken management's case should the rating be challenged. It could mean an unsupportable performance-based action should one ensue. If midpoint counseling has not been scheduled or conducted, employees should ask that it be done.

2. QUESTION: For the past two years I have received the highest rating. Now my supervisor has rated me lower and never "warned" me. Is he allowed to do this?

ANSWER: Yes. Supervisors are only required to "warn" or counsel an employee when they are failing in a critical element. A good management practice would be for the Rater to discuss the employee's decline in performance, but there is no requirement when the employee is performing at the success level or better.

3. QUESTION: Unfortunately, I was on extended sick leave for several months during my rating period and my supervisor did not give me a good rating, stating he couldn't give me a higher rating because I was on extended sick leave. Is this a valid reason to lower my rating?

ANSWER: No. A rating should not be lowered solely because the employee was absent. Employees should be rated for the work they actually performed during the time they were at work. If the Ratee is a leave abuser and on a leave restriction letter, his failure to perform expectations, as stated on the plan, may be documented.

4. QUESTION: I received a "Needs Improvement" on my Evaluation Report and subsequently received an overall "Fair" rating. How does this affect my career?

ANSWER: A "Needs Improvement" rating means the employee is not performing at an acceptable level (previously called "MET"). Supervisors should counsel and document the Ratee's shortcomings prior to giving a "Needs Improvement" rating. The overall rating automatically becomes a "Fair" (as long as all other objective/standard ratings are at least success). Because a "Fair" rating is not considered a rating at the acceptable level of competence, your Within Grade would be denied until you received a rating of Successful Level Three or above. If you were affected in a RIF, your bump or retreat rights to another position would be limited. Also, you would not be eligible to register for priority placement programs, nor would you receive any additional service credit for a RIF.

5. QUESTION: Under the old system I could write my comments on the rating form. May I add a sheet to my evaluation report under TAPES to include as a part of the record in my 201 File?

ANSWER: No, however, if you are a Senior System employee you are encouraged to provide your significant accomplishments on the Support Form in Part IVc. If you are a Base System employee, you may provide comments during your counseling sessions to be attached to your Checklist Form. One page may be added to the Support Form, but no additional pages are allowed with the Evaluation Report.

6. QUESTION: How do the standards listed on the Support Form affect my rating?

ANSWER: Under the Senior System, Raters should be rating each objective after considering the appropriate DA standards outlined on the Support Form. For example, the objective of “Revising Warehouse Inspection Procedures by 2d Qtr FY 05” would probably involve the DA standards of Technical Competence, Communication and Innovation. Even though the Ratee revised the procedures by making pen and ink changes to the old SOP (producing an accurate document), the Ratee may not receive a good rating for this objective. The Rater may consider that the Ratee showed no innovation and little writing skills, thereby holding the Ratee accountable through his TAPES evaluation. Under the Base System, Raters review each DA standard and then consider the job tasks/responsibilities as they relate to the DA standards before rating them.

7. QUESTION: DA guidance for Senior System employees states objectives should be “measurable.” What is meant by the term measurable?

ANSWER: An objective is a major goal or related short-term goals to be achieved during the current rating period that contribute to mission accomplishment. The Rater and Ratee should be able to evaluate to what degree the objective was attained. Objectives should serve as a motivational tool; within reach, but not too easy to accomplish.

8. QUESTION: As a senior rater, I do not always agree with the Rater’s ratings for his employees. May I rate the employees differently?

ANSWER: Yes. Discussion of an employee’s rating should take place prior to the employee receiving the rating. All raters should be able to provide specific examples for ratings. If a senior rater is in disagreement with subordinate raters, the senior rater should attempt to resolve the disagreement through discussion/negotiation first. If the disagreement is not resolved, the Senior Rater directs or makes the necessary changes to the Objective/Standard ratings and comments/examples. The rater and senior rater ratings on an Evaluation Report **must** be in agreement and the objective/standard ratings must equate to the overall rating.

9. QUESTION: What kinds of comments are recommended for Section V, Values?

ANSWER: Raters use this section to list ways the employee shows support of Army values (commitment, competence, candor, courage, loyalty, duty, selfless service and integrity). Written comments should be in “bullet” format describing specific examples or results or general work-related behavior. Some examples:

*Unselfishly volunteered for extra duty on numerous occasions.

*Often increases her workload to meet the needs of others.

*Stable, clear thinking and reliable in stressful situations.

* Uncompromising in his/her integrity and moral courage when compromise would be the easy way out.

*Demonstrates great flexibility in completing diverse projects.

*Successfully resolved a sensitive issue and provided good information to the workforce as a volunteer EEO Counselor.

10. QUESTION: Do I have to complete an appraisal on an employee who retires or resigns?

ANSWER: No. There is no requirement to complete an appraisal for those employees who retire or resign. However, if it is within 120 days from the end of the rating cycle, an early annual may be completed and used as the basis for a performance award.

11. QUESTION: If a measure is included in the written objective, do the preprinted standards have to be used?

ANSWER: No. The preprinted standards (measurement tools) are provided to meet regulatory requirements and to free the Rater from the time-consuming task of developing them. The Rater may now use that time for the crucial task of discussing performance expectations with the Rater. If the objective is written without a measure, the preprinted standards must be used in order to determine level of performance. Example: Develop lesson plan for TAPES training.

12. QUESTION: Are supervisors/managers required to develop objectives for supervision and leadership and Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) responsibilities?

ANSWER: Yes.

13. QUESTION: Who has the final say, when Rater and Ratee disagree on performance objectives?

ANSWER: The Rater.

14. QUESTION: When a Rater becomes unavailable to complete a rating, what is the Ratee's recourse?

ANSWER: Either the Intermediate Rater or the Senior Rater should complete the rating.

15. QUESTION: How does one show that an objective will not be rated?

ANSWER: Draw a line through the objective, date and place the Rater's initials next to the phrase "not rated" and have the employee (Ratee) initial and date.

16. QUESTION: What's the purpose of a Special rating?

ANSWER: Special ratings provide an evaluation of the Ratee's performance for the period covered, e.g. while the Ratee was on detail or during the early part of the rating period before the new Rater arrived. They are attached to the Annual rating when it is forwarded to the APG Advisory Center. There are instances when the Special rating may be converted to the Annual rating when there is no other documented performance history for the rating period.

17. QUESTION: As of 1 Nov, a ratee is due an annual rating but has worked less than 120 days under an approved performance plan. What does the rater do?

ANSWER: Extend the rating period by enough days to complete the 120-day minimum. An annual rating for this period is due into the APG Advisory Center within 45 days of the close of the cycle.

18. QUESTION: Can anyone other than the Commander or equivalent (one functioning with the same level and degree of authority), serve as both rater and senior rater on an evaluation report.

ANSWER: No.

19. QUESTION: Can an additional page be attached to the Evaluation Report? There's not enough space to justify a rating.

ANSWER: No. Bullet comments should be those most reflective of the ratee's level of performance, which supports the Responsibilities/Objectives ratings.

20. QUESTION: Can an Evaluation Report be prepared for an employee who was only available to work 60 days under an approved performance plan that was in effect for at least 120 days?

ANSWER: No. An employee must have worked at least 120 days under an approved plan before he/she may be evaluated.

21. QUESTION: Can an employee be evaluated on changes made to the performance plan with less than 120 days remaining before the rating period ends?

ANSWER: Yes, as long as there is enough time to fairly assess the employee's accomplishments, e.g. additions to the plan only require a few days to be completed. Don't make the changes if they would require an extended period of observation by the rater or don't rate the additional performance expectations until the next rating period ends.

22. QUESTION: What happens to a Special rating?

ANSWER: Special ratings are distributed with the original to the ratee and one copy each to the new rater and the rater who prepared the Special. The new rater must consider the Special

when he/she prepares the Annual rating and a copy of the Special should be attached to the Annual.

23. QUESTION: What do I do if part of an objective won't be completed until after the rating period ends?

ANSWER: Evaluate the work done to date or wait and rate the objective once completed during the next rating period; whichever is fairest to the Ratee.

24. QUESTION: Are deviations from the TAPES rating formulas allowed?

ANSWER: No. We believe the rating formulas offer enough flexibility for Raters to determine the Ratee's appropriate performance level.

25. QUESTION: Should the performance plan be reviewed when a Rater or Senior Rater reports in?

ANSWER: Yes and the change in the rating chain reflected on the performance plan.

26. QUESTION: What is the required level of performance in order to grant a WIGI?

ANSWER: Successful Level Three.

27. QUESTION: I want to give several of my employees monetary awards. Can I do this when I appraise them?

ANSWER: Yes. Performance awards are normally an extension of the appraisal system. Most employees receiving Level 1 or 2 ratings are eligible for awards. Consult your organization's award policy for details. Remember, if your award policy bases the amount of the award on a percent of salary, the salary to be considered for GS/GM employees is the base salary which does not include locality pay.

More WIGI Information:

An employee's last rating was Fair (Level 4). Six months into the rating cycle, the employee has completed the waiting period for a WIGI but would not receive it because of the Fair rating. If the supervisor feels that the employee has brought his/her performance up to Level 3 or better, the supervisor can give an off-cycle rating in order to grant the employee the WIGI.

The Rating Formulas:

- **Base System**
Successful Level 1:
(With No Supervisory Duties)
Rated Excellence in at least 3 of the 4 responsibilities and Success in the remainder.

(With Supervisory Duties)

Rated Excellence in 4 or more of the 6 responsibilities – at least one of which must be either Supervision/Leadership or EEO/AA (S/L-EEO/AA) and Success in the remainder.

Successful Level 2:

(With No Supervisory Duties)

Rated Excellence in either 1 or 2 of the responsibilities and Success in the remainder.

(With Supervisory Duties)

Rated Excellence in either 2 or 3 of the responsibilities, one must be either S/L-EEO/AA- and Success in the remainder.

- **Senior System**

Successful Level 1:

(With No Supervisory Duties)

Rated Excellence in 75% or more of rated objectives and Success in the remainder.

(With Supervisory Duties)

Excellence in 75% or more of rated objectives, with one being OM/L-EEO/AA and Success in the remainder.

Successful Level 2:

(With No Supervisory Duties)

Rated Excellence in 25-74% of rated objectives and Success in the remainder.

(With Supervisory Duties)

Rated Excellence in 25-74% of rated objectives with one being either OM/L-EEO/AA, Success in the remainder.

NOTE: No changes have been made to Level 3, 4, or 5 rating formulas.

TOTAL ARMY PERFORMANCE EVALUATION RATING CYCLES AT APG

	Rating cycle begins	Face-to-face midpoint	120 days from end of rating cycle	Rating cycles ends	Rating due in CPOC
SENIOR GS/WS/GM ST/SES 13+	1 Jul	Dec	3 Mar	30 Jun	15 Aug
SENIOR GS/WS 9-12	1 Nov	Apr	3 Jul	31 Oct	15 Dec

BASE
GS/WS
1-8 and
allWG/WL

1 Mar	Sep	1 Nov	28 Feb	15 Apr
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Supervisor's Responsibility: If a supervisor leaves his/her position within 120 days of the end of the rating period, an "early Annual" performance rating must be prepared as of the supervisor's departure date for each employee who falls within that rating cycle. A "Special" rating should be prepared for the remaining employees (provided they are under performance plans for at least 120 days). If an employee leaves his/her position within 120 days of the end of their rating period, the supervisor must prepare an "early Annual" rating as of the employee's date of departure.

**MOST COMMON ERRORS ON A TAPES EVALUATION REPORT
(MUST BE RETURNED BY THE APG APPRAISAL COORDINATOR)**

Rater and senior rater ratings not in agreement; e.g., in the Senior System the rater checks Excellence over 50% in Part VIa and the senior rater checks overall performance rating of Successful Level 2 in Part VIIa.

Failure to have the objective ratings on the Support Form equate to the overall rating.

Failure to number and annotate objective ratings on the performance plan.

Failure to attach the performance plan to the Evaluation Report.

Performance plan was not in effect for the minimum 120-day requirement.

Senior rater did not initial and date the performance plan (remember, this is the effective date of the performance plan).

No specific objectives for Organizational Management/Leadership or Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) for supervisory positions.

Failure to document employee's and/or supervisor's signature on performance plan and/or evaluation report. Signatures/initials must be completed on all TAPES forms.

Failure to complete the senior rater overall performance rating.

SPECIAL APPRAISALS:

1. When the employee is on detail or temporarily promoted for 120 days or more, a performance plan should be developed and a Special rating prepared for the period.

2. Special Ratings are **NOT** ratings of record. Distribution is as follows: original to ratee, copy to new rater and copy to rater who prepared report. When the Annual report is prepared, a copy of the Special is attached to the Annual Rating and forwarded to the Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC).

3. If the ratee is on detail for all or most of the rating cycle, a special rating is prepared and forwarded to the rater of record. Rater of record may decide that the special should be used as the annual report. Rater of record completes Parts I and II of Evaluation Report Form. A statement is placed in Part IV, which says “attached special is to be considered as an annual report.” Special report is attached.

CAREER INTERNS: Interns are rated 6 months after entry into position and again at 12 months. The rating at 6 months is considered a special rating. The rating at 12 months is considered an annual rating.

Counseling Points

- * Within 30 days of beginning of rating period
- * Mid Point
- * End of Cycle
- * Other times as needed
- * Face to Face
- * Explain rating chain
- * Discuss job description
- * Discuss tasks and level of performance
- * Discuss goals & training needs

Opportunity to Improve:

There may be times, as a supervisor, when you have an employee who isn't performing at a successful level. When it happens you need to know what to do.

At any time during the appraisal cycle that an employee's performance on any objective/responsibility is unacceptable (the “fails” level), the supervisor must inform the employee of the objectives/responsibilities in which performance is unacceptable, in what way it is unacceptable, and exactly what is required to bring it up to the “Success” level. The employee must be provided a reasonable opportunity period to demonstrate acceptable performance. That opportunity process, for employees who are not in a probationary or trial period, takes the form of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP is a formal document that needs to be developed with the assistance of the APG Advisory Center. The time needed to demonstrate acceptable performance is a judgment made by the supervisor based on such considerations as:

- the employee's position,
- the extent of the performance problem, and
- the nature of the problem.

Management Actions During the Opportunity Period: Below are actions that may be required during the opportunity period:

- Closer supervision and counseling
 - Personal task accomplishment demonstration or on-the-job training
 - Supervisory or peer coaching
 - Frequent feedback
 - Special assignments
 - Formal training
- Referral to **Employee Assistance Program**

If, after a reasonable opportunity to improve, normally 90-120 days, performance remains unacceptable, the employee should be removed from the position. If there are appropriate vacancies in your organization, efforts should be made to reassign the employee to a more suitable position. If no chance for reassignment exists, demotion should be considered before removal from service.

The decision to demote rather than remove an employee from the Federal service is based on the availability of a vacant position, the duties of which the employee could and would successfully perform. Action to remove the employee from the Federal service must be started if there are no suitable vacancies or if management decides that the employee could not adequately perform the duties of available vacant positions.

Contact your servicing APG Advisory Center Specialist with questions concerning TAPES.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

DIANE J. SMITH
Director, APG Advisory Center

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1 Ea Pres, of AFGE (Locals 1409 & 1799, IAFF 267, IAM Local 2424), NFFE (Locals 178 and 2058)